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June 1993

Dear Danny, Pearl, David, Ellen, Josh, Jeff, Bob, Nancy, Benjie, Michael, Joey.

Ever since we wrote about our visit to Auschwitz, I have come to realize that you might wish to know more, about us and our families. As I think back, how little I really knew about my Grandparents, what they were like, since as a child I knew them only briefly. Several facts intrude, from 1920 the year I was born till the present the world changed probably as much as it did in the preceding 3000 years. It seems incredible that so many things and changes took place in that relative short time. It will be difficult to relate my life with this enormous background of change, everything that happened took place under these circumstances. My cousin Frank drew up a family tree, I am thankful for that but I soon realized that this is not enough. What were they like, how healthy? , What did they do? , How did they die? , Remains just a question. As I set out to write this on Word Perfect I can only hope that this effort will be useful.

There have not been very many questions, which seems strange I do not think its indifference, more likely it's what bothers us all, there is not enough time to smell the roses. The demands on our time are incredible. Current events demand attention, there is little time to look back. It is our hope that by writing about our past you can understand make decision and build on our experience and as well as you're own.

My Father, Max Berdass, born in Silesea told me little of his youth. I was only ten years old when he died, what I do know is what my mother related to us. My Father served in the German Army in World War I. Came out of that war, started a business and got married about the same time. He had a growing enterprise I think two stores and one warehouse retailing kitchenware dishes and household items. My Mother told me that he was as boxer and loved auto racing. The racing stuck in my mind because it frightened my Mother. In those days they raced in two seat racers with no top or doors and my Mother had to go along. My Father was ahead of his time, he liked many sports and skiing was one of his favorites. Children in those days were to be seen not heard. That is not to say our parents were not caring or kind, but in no manner could a comparison be drawn from then to now. We were financially well enough to what today passes as upper middle class. We had domestic help, it was important to get along with the help, because if the issue arose that it would reach our parents it became serious. Life in Germany was different, more formal more pedantic. I recall vividly on Yom Kippur my Father would go to the Synagogue dressed in a morning coat and a cylinder hat (stove pipe), and on those days we would walk to the Synagogue. In retrospect that was odd since we were otherwise not very observant. I recall Sunday afternoon outings we would drive out to the country for coffee and cake and visiting with friends. In 1930 my father died. The level of my maturity as my Mother told me, when she informed me of his death, my concern was who would now drive the car? Years later I would begin to understand the tragedy and the pain that his death inflicted on us.

Here are the names of relatives on my Father's side of which I knew very little. My Father had a Brother Delfried who lived in Bochum near Essen Germany I think he is

buried there. I do not recall ever meeting him. One sister Alma, married Fred Hauschner in Breslau the parents of my cousin Edith Schuftan. She married Martin Schuftan in Germany had one daughter Ruth who married Dennis Zalazar in Cleveland now residing in Lake Worth Fl. They have no children. Martin died and Edith lives in West Palm Beach, Florida. My Grandmother Rosa Berdass, whom I visited in Breslau, my Grandfather Philip after whom I was named had passed away before my birth. My Grandfather came from Liegnitz, near Breslau Germany. While I enjoyed good relations with my Grandmother, my Mother did not. You will see from my Mothers side of this story, her family had to leave Briesen then Germany soon to become Poland. As usual for Jews, leave most of their possession behind. Thus my Mother came from financial circumstance that my Grandmother deemed below my Fathers status. When visiting my Grandmother, I traveled either with my Father by car or alone by train to visit my relatives in Breslau. This concludes my Fathers side of the story.

My Mother, Else Berdass, born Pottlitzer in Briesen in 1897 was 15 years younger than my Father. Not an unusual practice, credit as we know it today was not yet in practice. Unless the man had some financial security marriage was not likely, since it took time to establish onself. My Mother had three sisters and one brother. Grete Loewenthal, since passed away in Australia was the mother of Gert and Ernst, they live in Australia. Their brother Fred now lives in Israel and Fred's sister Hildchen passed away some time ago. Their Father Emiel and my aunt Grete came to Australia through the efforts of Ernst who was the first to go there. Uncle Emiel had a factory in Berlin. He dealt in metal never really learned what he did, he had a difficult time adjusting in Australia. Aunt Grete was a very special aunt, very talented in Music. I was one of her favorites. When she had her change of life the doctors advised her to become pregnant again. She did, and raised two families as she was then in her forties. Thus, Fred and his sister were much younger than their older brothers. Gert who was a good student in physics eventually became one of Australians leading Atomic Scientist. Ernst became an Engineer and Teacher and a developer of a Ski slope to continue his love for skiing. When Ernst first came to visit us in Minneapolis I met him at the station. Some 40 years had elapsed since last I saw him, I was looking for a tall fellow, back then he was a head taller, luckily he recognized me he was shorter than I had expected. Fred also became an Engineer, working for an Electric Utility, he and his family moved to Israel to live in Kibbutz Schiller near Rehovot. Our families spend many holidays like Pesach in Berlin with our Grandfather Sally Pottlitzer who for a while lived with the Loewenthals. The next sister Lilly married Karl Moses and they too, lived in Berlin.. Karl was Margo's uncle, and the brother of Jacob Moses Margo's father. They were childless and fussed over us. Uncle Karl was popular with us children. He had a Radio Store, drove a Hanomag that was an odd looking contraption, it could only hold two people but we enjoyed riding around. As you go over our history you see that our families became tangent on several occasions. Aunt Ruth, the youngest sister, married Martin Cohn, they had one son Frank. He married Paula and they have one daughter Lori. He had spent much time in the Army and rose to the rank of Colonel. Paula and Frank served in the Army of occupation in Germany and later Frank served a tour in Vietnam. Hans, mother's only brother, lived in New York, he had married Gina Marcus, Margo's cousin. She is living in New York, divorced Hans some years ago,

and they had no children. Hans had a difficult time adjusting to America. He worked in Clubs arranging dinners for prominent clients. In the winter month both would work in the Clubs in Florida. When we came to New York we would try to meet with Hans. He was difficult to reach, for a time he had no phone, I would rent car and drive to his apartment hoping he would be home or come by. Before emigrating, they, too, lived in Berlin. Hans would play with us children, rolling us into blankets and than rapidly pulling the end of the blanket spinning us out. He became a loner after the divorce. He became ill and we received a call from the NY Police that they found him dead in his Apartment. Prior to that we had phoned a number of times and suggested that he move to Arizona into a retirement community, he was not interested. Hans left a modest estate that he willed to us his nephews and nieces.

My Mothers parent's Sally Pottlitzer and Hedwig, born Davis, had lived in Briesen, in what was then the Polish corridor that changed nationalities often. After world war one, Briesen and that territory returned to Poland and they had to make a choice. If they wished to remain German citizens they had to move west to Germany. They moved to Berlin. Since the territory became Polish when later my Mother wanted to emigrate to the United States she fell under the Polish quota, that was over subscribed. My Grandmother Hedwig, after leaving Briesen had taken some valuables. I never learned what, as they were moving to Berlin, she somehow displaced them, and if I got the story correct, died of grief never to find them. Grandfather Sally was still living when I left in 1939, He was then in his 80ties. Mother's letters never mentioned it but I must assume he perished in the camps.

So much for mother's family. I have difficulty recalling times that go back over 50 years. My mother, Mutti in German, was a beautiful woman, warm and kind can not really think of many things of her scolding me, but I can think of many reasons. After my Father died she had the responsibility of running a business that she had not been called on before, without training or experience, did remarkably well. Compound this with the Nazi period and all the restrictions ordered on Jews it must have been overwhelming. My Mother had heart problems and high blood pressure. I recall her taking medication. I did not know the seriousness of her illness since she was otherwise in good health. I can recall her telling me when I became old enough to meet girls and travel with our youth group that I not go with some one I could not introduce to her. She had high standards and expected no less from us. I recall in the fall of 1938 laws changed. Jews who carried Polish Passports were ordered out of the country and return to Poland. We learned that many of those were shipped out on trains with only what they could carry and without provision. My Mother and I went to several bakeries, where we bought all the rolls and bread we could get. We took it to the station platform that had many uniformed Nazis to watch that none of the Jews would escape.

At any rate we were able to get the bread and rolls into the train under the disapproving stare of the Nazis. They, in all likelihood had not been briefed for the possibility of Jews coming to help these unfortunates. In the end we later learned the Poles would not accept them and were put into camps. I was very proud of my Mother for this very courageous act. It gave me a lesson I shall never forget. After I left for America my Mother married

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Julius Lichtenstein. My Sister told me that my Mother waited till then since she felt that I would not get along with him. He visited our house fairly frequently, was present Friday night dinners. I recall differences but nothing of real import. Those were difficult times, preparing for what? That the visa be released from the American embassy. Take Berlitz classes in English, if that might not work out classes in Spanish, prepare to get out. Within just that range there were many opinions, Lichtenstein and I were of different minds. In retrospect my attitude was selfish, depriving my Mother of security and company, was most regrettable. My Mother never discussed their possible marriage but in those times this would not necessarily be a subject she would discuss with me. An explanation may be in order. I stated earlier that children were to be seen not heard, communications then were much different. Many changes that took place and still are taking place, conversations between parents and children from what we would call in legal terms standings visa vie one another have changed. They are today more open and casual. When I was young they were more constrained. This ends the sketch of my parents.

I was born in Chemnitz as was my sister Ruth who arrived 2 years later . When I saw her for the first time I thought she was a Puppe (Doll) in English and the name Puppa stuck. That I now think she is a Doll in a much wider sense made that prophetic. About my earlier days I have little recall. I was not a good eater and the doctor said I was malnourished, for openers the usual period for circumcision were delayed for a week so that I could overcome the ordeal. Years later I remember driving from Chemnitz to Berlin. An all day trip, and shortly before coming to Berlin we would drive on the Avus a race track with steeply banked turns, my Dad loved racing. My first years in public school were uneventful so much so that I can't recall a single teacher's name, just their faces. I marvel when others relate teacher's name and influence, I draw a blank and must hasten to add I was not much of a student. My Dad called me Gaurisanka Luemmel. As best I know, the first word is a river in Spain and the second means a young boy who does not listen to well. I am sure that it was an endearing term. I was 8 years old and needed an appendix operation, I recall my Dad very much in charge. When I awoke from the operation, I was strapped to the bed to keep me still. The Doctor was a good friend of my parents and I recovered nicely. This took place late in the fall of 1928. Month later we went on vacation in the Ertzgebirge on the Czechoslovakia border. Instructed not to ski lest I fall and open the newly healed incision. I did not listen and going down a popular slope I fell not seriously but guess who saw me fall, it was my Doctor. For a moment I thought his eyes would fall out of his head. Today 65 years later, patients leave their bed the same day. I got grounded and that was the end of that vacation. The things one remembers. The next summer I went to Camp on Wyck of Foehr, an Island in Friesland right next to the Danish border. Strange that I recall much of that experience. I think I was there for 8 weeks, recall going swimming in the North Sea. My first contact with children from other towns and lands. One boy who came to camp speaking only Hungarian soon learned the language and by the time he went home was fluent. Learning camp songs and making friends. On the Island was a small Catholic Church, we were from a Jewish camp but visited this Church. It had a huge picture of Christ painted in such a fashion that no matter where we stood the eyes were on us. At night when the sea

was calm one could see the lights of nearby Islands but they would disappear with high or rough sea. The following year my dad died, I have written about that previously all the relatives came to the funeral. Puppa and I did not go to the funeral, Mother wanted to shield us. We had a chapel on the cemetery. The body was attended too by the Chevra Kadisha.

My dad died in the spring, I recall visiting the cemetery every Sunday afternoon for a whole year. We take the Streetcar to the end of the line on the West Strasse and walk a short distance to the grave site. It is difficult to judge what affects that trauma had on us except that it could not have been positive. Those were somber times. In 1933 was my Bar Mitzwah. Mine was a double header a boy named Motulski from a nearby town shared my Haftara, he got rattled and ran from the pulpit. A little background is in order, our instruction in Hebrew and the preparatory work for the Bar was by tutor. I don't recall my portion since what I read was by rote., We have to remember that this was a rapidly assimilating Jewish community that had forgotten where it came from and really did not know where it was going. I know that now but did not then. Mr. Kramer, my tutor, was Wolfgang Wassermans Wife's Father.

We were kids together in Chemnitz, they now live in North Miami Beach, Florida. We visit them when we are in Boca.Raton. Mr.Kramer was our Cantor to make him free of all blame my lack of Hebrew and Jewish education was not his. When I was 14, my Mother decided to send me to a school in northern Bavaria called Burg Prepach. Do not know what tempted her to make that decision, I never ask and she never told me. That school for boys was really a Yeshiva, I lived with a very orthodox family who owned a matzo bakery, though I am raised Jewishly, my ignorance was appalling. The does and don't, in an orthodox environment are many. If I did not violate the Shabbat, it would be Kashrut since I did not know the laws let alone the reason or rational. In class the others were reading Talmud and Gemara. At 14 I could barely read Hebrew, they had been at it for 7 or more years. The teachers just gave me special assignments. I don't think my Mother knew but if she did, the discipline there was very helpful. I made friends with the other boys who thought I was more like a goy. I was good at soccer. that always helps, my voice and talent for music saved me. I sang in the choir and began to observe that what expected of us all. This episode lasted a little over a year. We went to service every day. Sang on Sabbath and Yom Tovim. The practice of wearing the yarmulke and attending service daily had no peer support. Once I returned to Berlin the cousins to whom I looked up, made fun of me. We all know what peer approval means. This experience had influence on me, which is not easy to describe. It gave me a perspective on Judaism that has been a source of strength.

I am 15 years old, the Nazi period begins to assert. In school there are assemblies almost daily celebrating different Nazi accomplishments. Classes more and more directed toward propaganda, poster showing arms, tanks, planes and warship all directed against Germany by the rest of the world. Poor Germany had nothing to defend itself except a small army that the treaty of Versailles allowed. Lies all lies. Soon Jews are ordered to sit in the back benches, when you raised your hand you would not be recognized. Papers were not accepted, the message was clear. Prevailing opinions among the Jews, its going

to get better, don't ask why, it's human nature. Retrospectively that was the problem, instinct born of experience was faulty precisely because we were playing a game, the rules of which we thought applied had changed. (An entire nation of 60 million acting irrational). Jokes, Hitler blames the Jews and the Radfahrers (bicyclerider) why them? Retort, why the Jews. The joke tells the whole story. It was not comprehensible, no one believed the Nazis were prepared to murder us all. Raul Hilgenberg in his seminal Study "The Destruction of the Jews," from material gained after the war from tapes and correspondence of SS. Generals pleading with Hitler and Himmler to postpone the killings until the end of the war since they needed workers in defense and other critical production. For the wrong reasons, they understood the waste of life.

By now we are active in Jewish youth movements. Two separate movements the Shield, Youth Group, the other, the Macaby, relative newcomers from Poland yiddish speaking. Some from more observant background, some nonreligious but Zionists. Nonreligious Zionism is an oxymoron at least to my way of thinking, The deed to the land and its logical claim for being there is the Bible and yet they reject it. The Shield to which I belong has a good soccer team, playing Macaby and hold our own. Even then it became clear to us that they at least had a sense of direction and destination, Palestine. We would go anywhere they take us. This is not easy to relate, it is not just that we are strangers in the country of our birth, we are actually stateless, our cultural tie is German, German Jewish as I have indicated the Jewishness is weakened by assimilation. We did not as we still do here live in communities, blocks or neighborhood in which a majority are Jews. The German culture we reject since it rejects us, we look deep into German history, the period of the 30 year war is what we can identify. That period when indentured farmers sought to free themselves, and in a long bloody struggle did. We identified with that movement, sang their songs long out of circulation, we rediscovered them. The main theme freedom. Then it was not a popular theme, not in Nazi Germany. Du bist nichts, dein Volk ist alles, you are nothing, the State is all. Poor math if nothing is equal to zero no matter how large the multiplier the sum is zero, the Germans really never learned that simple lesson. We realize that our Jewish culture is sadly neglected, we read Rosenzweig, Kafka, and many others, clearly opting for Zionism now was too late in the game. One studied Hebrew not English and Spanish, and Zionists did not look for any one whose Zionist commitment was in question. Playing games were really our only good activity. We had our own track and field and I excelled in 1500, 3000, 5000, and 10000 meter runs and in relays. Parents never came to the games or matches, we had trainers that were a couple of years older than us, and we organized much on our own.

We study in small groups for the Berlitz lessons. We make book reports a couple of books a week. We make up all sorts of mental games to hone skills. Recognizing we are just killing time as gradually we begin to emigrate, one to Brazil the other to America. I worked for a Stocking Manufacturing Company in their maintenance department, but as these Jewish firms were taken over, the jobs for us go away. I help in the store, make deliveries on my bike. Some years back, making one such delivery, it was customary to tip for such service, so I hung around waiting for the tip, she says to me (bist du nicht der kleine Berdass?) are you not the little Berdass? First denying and then affirming was embarrassing. I learned a lesson, if they tipped they tipped. I was part of the store and

thanked them. So much for being enterprising. I wrote about the Kristall Nacht in 1938, after passage of the Nuremberg Laws essentially disenfranchising us. We had domestic live in to help my mother. The laws forbade of Jewish males living under the same household with nonjews I moved to a pension across the street. I would come home for meals. After she quit, I moved back. Time forces me to skip other detail but I am sure you get a sense of what was going on. When after Kristall Nacht I fled to Berlin I went as often as could to the American embassy in hopes of expediting my visa. The embassy was mainly staffed with German personnel judging their conduct all Nazis and as far as I can tell, the Ambassador approved. This accounts for my personal animus toward our State Department. Not only cheated the Germans of what was rightfully ours, when it came to our government here to present our best interests, making accommodations to the Germans had a greater priority, and we were cheated twice.

Puppa and I had a generation gap and a gender gap. In those days few if any kids dated or went steady. We met in groups boys and girls. Sometimes we escort someone home but by all standards we cannot even begin to draw comparison to customs of today. Boys were with boys and girls with girls. The fact that the future was uncertain may have been a large factor. Puppa who was well endowed at an early age was an embarrassment to me, which would only prove my own immaturity. We were sibling rivals. Since she was by all odds a much better student, and better behaved, in my own defense this is generally the case if you compare genders. Before I leave this period I have a mystery. We had much time on our hands and I listened to the radio at night. I developed a taste and understanding of classical music. From Opera to Symphony to entire scores that I can identify by just the first couple of chords, yet, cannot recall how I became knowledgeable of so much music. Odd that this was one of the few good things I carried away. Before leaving I had to report to Gestapo Secret Police to get my Passport. I cannot recall his name, but the Policeman knew me by sight since he was present on all our sports events and soccer games. He questioned me why I wanted the Passport, as if he did not know. I told him there was no future for me in Germany and I wanted to go to the USA. He sternly warned that I should not make propaganda against Germany and gave me my Passport. In Jan 1939 I left Chemnitz for Rotterdam. I remember going to the station, it was sad it was wrenching and my mother saying she will probably never see me again. Fifty four years ago and it hurts to write about it today. This ends the chapter of my youth and life in Germany.

America

Via the SS Veendam, a Dutch vessel, in Rotterdam I meet uncle Karl and aunt Lilly, We are sailing on the same ship to New York. It took 6 days, a mixture of sorrow and anticipation. On board mostly Jews emigrating. One man in his 60 talking about Hitler. He is from Austria. Claim we are at fault blame Jews not Hitler and the Germans, he is not alone in his meshugas, I spoke up and had a disagreeable argument. Lesson, you don't argue with fools. Come to think the same differences came about between Mr. Lichtenstein and myself. For many people would think there had to be a reason. Digressing for a moment. In conversations with friends, on the matter of Jewish versus Christian beliefs, since we are so few, and they are so many, maybe they are right?

That is a big part of our problem, by count or by the numbers the perpetual minority creates complex situations. That makes Israel so critical, there has to be a place of our own where we are the majority. That we should be a light to other nations may have inflated some egos but has exacted a terrible price and in the end proved nothing.

Looking back on Jewish Diaspora history. The norm for radical powerlessness described by this example. An old Yiddish song "schmuelchen war beim militare osser hat er getragen a gewehr" Broadly translated Sam got drafted yet he never took up arms. He might have had good reasons, it was not his cause. The general notion that Jews will not fight had broad acceptance, among us as well as those who wished us ill. Israel has lifted this self imposed yoke from us. Extreme pacifism is as wrong as is its opposite. We discovered you cannot run away. There may no longer be a place to hide.

Back to the Boat, we arrive Feb. 9 1939. Uncle Hans and Gina, Uncle Martin and Ruth come to Hoboken where we land. I had 10 dollars to my name. I stayed with aunt Ruth and uncle Martin on 110 and Broadway it may have been 120 street I am not sure. Learned of uptown and downtown somehow that was not part of Berlitz. I stayed in town for about a week, made connection with the Hias a Jewish organization to help newcomers as they called us and they suggested that I go to York Pa. There the Jewish community would help me in finding a job. At this point my English is passable the "Th." is a dead give a way my pronunciation is just fair. Hias wants us to move to the hinterland, Too many in New York with more arriving every day. I take a bus from New York to eastern Pa. A road I would traverse many times later, on my own. In York I meet a very nice couple. What would I like to do, I was inclined to things mechanical, in Chemnitz I worked with and repaired machines. I was introduced to Mr. Lehmayer the owner of the Pennsylvania Tool and Die. A first class establishment with an excellent reputation. Besides building commercial Tools and Dies, they build special tooling and fixtures for the Navy Yard in Philadelphia. My job, picking up scrap and shavings from the machines. Later on I am building special wooden boxes for the shipment of dies and tools. A step up and I am earning .30 an Hour after deductions' a little under \$ 12.00 a week. I live in the YMCA and eat in the cafeteria. I have little left of the \$ 10.00 I started, but quickly learn, if I am not frugal, there is not much left to live on Thursdays. I travel by bus to work and in the evenings I go to the movies. That, so every one tells am

the best way to learn English and Customs. Some of the workers are helpful others resent foreigners. My Mother writes me to be careful and not fall in with the girls, she has little to worry my life in York is pretty lonely and friends are not made that easy. One toolmaker has me over to the house and helps me in many ways.

I have never forgotten the help Hias and the Jewish community gave me. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to do my share of giving opportunity to others from Poland and Russia. I may give you a wrong impression, I had little money and things got tight on occasions, never did I consider myself poor, or for that matter deprived. I was hopeful and prospective of better things to come, never doubting my ability to cope. My problem was that I had still one foot here, the other in Germany, mainly the concern for my Mother. I learn quickly but facts are, I am a greenhorn. Could I approach a representative? I am not a citizen, I carry the bundle of attitudes from Europe, petition government? It is just not done. to ask for help with my Mother, besides the attitude generally, jobs are scarce why bring in more people. I meet an older fellow in the shop through him I come to know the Selmser's, who are looking for a border. I leave the YMCA and move to their house. By now my earnings have improved. The hourly pay is \$.60 per hour. Mrs. Selmser takes good care of me, with the room and board she washes my laundry. Selmsers have two children a boy my age Selmser Jr., and a daughter. Both tower over me in. The girl has some mental problem from birth but Jr. and I get on well. He has a car and I join his friends.

My Mother expecting to come to the US, cautions me to save my money. That is not the problem. In needed some one with influence in Washington. or with political connection. I write to my uncle Hans in Cleveland if he could help me with getting my Mother a visa, he is well off he wont help. I cannot explain why Hans Seideman whom my Dad practically put through Medical School refused. Apparently his wife who was also a Doctor was not sympathetic. Hans Seideman after all gave me the affidavit that lead to my visa. As for myself, I never ask him for assistance. I visited Seidemans over a week end in Cleveland, after that rarely heard from them or they from me. He died some years back. We met once in Palm Beach at my cousins Edith's house.

Meanwhile my skills improve markedly. I become an expert machinist and toolmaker, my pay rises in proportion, Selmser Jr. teaches me how to drive, Buy a car recognizing that without one, in as small town you can not move around. Nothing to it, small down payment and easy, monthly payments, and I begin to taste the good life. Penn Tool, it is now early 1940 the shooting in Europe is for real and the Navy needs Fixtures for Torpedoes, aliens are not permitted on the premise. I am still an alien. to become a citizen takes 5 Years. Mr. Lehmayer calls me in the office, has already placed me with York Electric Machine, I report there the same day. That plant was off the beaten track.

I was lucky to have my own transportation. I work there until December 7 1941. Pearl Harbor and World War 2 has started for the US. I register for the draft. Was offered a job by Florola Company in York, they wanted me to supervise their second shift, some 65 people. Never found out how the found me but the pay was more than double. Work 12 hours a night, seven days a week.

The draft then was little like a lottery run by the local draft board. My alien status would not allow enlistment that many of my friends elected, so when registering for the draft I had volunteered for immediate service. Found it strange that the draft board never called. Visited the draft office were they explained to me that Florola was only doing defense work, and had obtained a critical exemption for me. I approached my manager and told him he had a choice. lift my status on the draft board or I would quit, which would make me subject to immediate army induction. The conversation was not pleasant, he maintained that I was just a little runt, and my service would be better in the shop.

I tried to explain that this war was mine, if anyone had an ax to grind it was I and nothing could deter me. Florola had been very good to me and I agreed to train my replacement and reported to the Army for Induction December 1942. In retrospect York was an ideal place to become Americanized. I learned the ropes, met young people mostly Christian, the Jewish community was very small and was a tight knit group. They had little interest in meeting newcomers at least people my age. I had one Jewish friend Rolf Siegler whom I knew from Chemnitz meeting of all places in York. We traveled together to New York, Baltimore, Delaware and the eastern seashore. After the war we drifted apart Rolf was good enough to lend me the \$400.00 to buy my mother's visa to Cuba, you know from my previous writing that it came to nothing. Mom and I repaid Rolf after the war. Concluding my York experience I sold my car made my good-byes, and was inducted into the Army.

Not knowing what to expect I had some strange notions of heroism I suppose most of us had. I go through the induction routine. I get the shots in the arm one in each and they almost double in size from swelling. Get uniforms boots and the clothing and the realization that I am no longer the captain of my ship. I am told what to do, to say, salute and that was a shock. The army gives a battery of test mechanical aptitude. Do I speak another language? A little German? I did not want a desk job I wanted the infantry looking at the German through my rifle scope. Sure enough I travel to a Camp in Virginia for Motor Pool training. Before that training starts we have six weeks of basic infantry training. Learn to handle weapon's shoot the rifle, take it apart assemble it. Do this blindfolded, much marching and exercise. Training on the obstacle courses, we crouch under barbed wire with live ammunition shooting about a foot above us, it's a good idea to stay close to the ground. Completing basic training I make good grades in the motorpool school from my pervious job experience handling gauges and measuring devices it was easy. Private Berdass report to the orderly room.

I smartly salute and the officer of the day hands me an envelope with my transfer paper. Report to Camp Bowie in Texas to the 441st Prisoners of War Processing Company. I am not a good liar, a little German, I should have known they would figure out that living in Germany 17 years, I would have to know more than little German. After three days travel to Texas the 441st had moved to Michigan Fort Custer. I travel their courtesy of US government.

The 441st is an interesting place, Interpreters German, Italian, Japanese, fingerprint specialist, photographers and just regulars. Almost all the German speaking men are Jewish. Basic training all over, and training becomes serious. We are ordered into a

barrack there are typewriters with blank keys on each desk. A large keyboard with letters displayed in front of us, we copy books to learn how to finger the keyboard. Most of us pay no attention. Went to the latrine played cards and dice. When it came time to collect the papers, mine like many others were blank. That night we discovered KP in army lingo kitchen police. Peeling potatoes, scrubbing benches, floors and windows till morning. After breakfast we are ready to hit the sack, sorry to report we were marched back to the typewriters. It took one additional period just like the one I just completed for me to discover that unless I would learn how to type, KP would be my permanent position. I learned in a hurry.

Training became more intensive. Identifying enemy uniform and rank, equipment from aircraft to tanks lectures and tests till late at night. Lessons in interrogation, practice on each other the rules of conduct in war and the Geneva convention. Confined to camp no leaves or passes. After completion we could get a furlough. Fortunately Margo, and previously her Mother on the urging of my aunt Gina had written to me. Here I was all alone in the army, with no one to write to me. Miss Moses was good enough to invite me to spend my furlough in St. Paul. She had included a photo, and was then as now a very pretty girl. She met me at the station. Margo's parents whom I had met, many years prior in Winzig on vacation treated me warmly. It was pretty much love at first sight.

Max

Margo's brother-in-law and Ruth her Sister welcomed me and gave us their car to go out at night, things took their normal turn and we became engaged. None of you would ever suspect you mother or grandma to be a fast worker. For myself I was smitten and had a new agenda for my life. Looking back, my luck and good fortune on so many occasions were remarkable, finding Margo topped them all.

We honed our skills in interrogating, and first contacting the Nazis Soldiers was strange.

After I returned to camp, we transferred to North Camp Hood, Texas. There was a large prison camp housing prisoners from the North Africa Corps. We enter the prison compound unarmed, that was Army procedure and was continued in Europe.

Astonishingly when one of us would enter they would jump to attention, several hundred all at once. They were very cocky at first but as the month of internment lengthens they learned that this war would not end as Hitler had promised.

We set the wedding date and in December I returned to St. Paul and were married on the 5th. of December 1943. Margo in white I in Uniform in the Rabbis study of the old Temple Aaron in St. Paul. Mother made an afternoon reception. All their friends many of the German immigrants, came to bring their good wishes. One lady remarked looking at Margo saying "she was a Child Bride." That night Margo's parents gave a party for us at Alverdie's Restaurant. When Mom will write her own autobio, she may have other thing to say. We had our Honeymoon in Minneapolis, that December had no snow, but was bitter cold, as the song goes "we had our love to keep us warm."

Returning to Camp Hood in Texas, we receive more POWs. We learn that soon we will go overseas. Margo comes to Gatesville, Texas we rent a little room and spend a couple of weeks together. Soon we get our orders, and leave for New York to board a large

passenger ship, sail unescorted to Scotland. We are fortunate the German Submarines do not attack..My army experience could fill many pages and may be at another time give more detail. Army life generally is a matter of hurry up and wait. First we worked in Scotland and later in England from there to France. In England just like in Texas we had prisoners from the north African campaign. Once we got to France we had newly captured Germans. We set up a mile or two from the lines, process the prisoners. Interrogating and obtaining the data and information we then record. We interview while typing the answers, observe facial markings, the normal police procedure. We would work without stopping for days and nights other times we would simply sit around and wait. Our company is broken up into small sub groups to cover as many places as possible, after the Normandy Invasion entire German armies surrendered.

At night we sleep in make shift shelters or tents, and sometimes in foxholes. The German planes would fly over at night and our antiaircraft fire became a hazard when the shells fell back to the ground. The army had a large library, soft cover books, over my years in the service, must have read some 1000 books. American literature, novels, history and science.. Many of my friends did the same. We had many things in common, Most of us interpreters were Jewish with few exceptions. One of them was a Dan Newberry, we befriended and stayed friends, by now we only exchanging greetings on occasions. Newberry came from Atlanta Georgia. He had learned German while taking chemistry in school, since the text books then were primarily in German. Dan was a bright person and we spent much of our time together. I learned things of Georgia and of his childhood, learned about customs that I never new much about, he learned from me about my background. Within our small group we became a close knit culture of working, reading, playing cards and waiting. Whoever won in cards bought lunch or dinner. if we could find a restaurant.. Transient kitchen usually existed in any post or encampment to serve transients, and had atrocious food. We would prefer to live on candy bars from the Post Exchange. To sum up it was not great but frankly, many had it a much tougher.

During the war we were all over the continent. In Belgium, Holland, France south as far Marseilles and eventually to Germany. A snapshot from my days of interrogating German prisoners. The war is nearing its end, the Germans are diseased from fleas and malnutrition. We because of the proximity to them get weekly injections for typhus. After the Germans come from the line of combat, where they were captured or surrendered they come to us. I write this for all who may wish to give the benefit of doubt to the Germans. About a fourth of a mile from us are a group of vehicles, one a steam generating unit with a tall smoke stack belching black smoke from burning wood. Next to it a large chamber for the purpose of delousing, the prisoners, and their clothes. The unit creates steam hot enough to kill germs and fleas. The Germans see their fellow prisoners remove their clothes, and enter naked. They see them entering but see no one coming out. For obvious reasons they're coming out the other end but that was not observable. At first we could not understand their pleading. Then it dawned on us that this replicated the concentration camps. They broke out in tears, removing their wallets with pictures of their wife and children, begging not be taken to that station. The majority of the Germans would like to have us believe, did not know about concentration camps and the mass killings. Their

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response to seeing this unit clears up this story. Another snap shot early in the war, we reach LeMans France we find a large Catholic Orphanage, almost all the kids are Jewish. Our French, Yiddish or German does the trick, they know they are Jewish, they do not know their names, some of the older kids know from where they came. We collect money, and from the Post Exchange and we purchase candy and goodies to give the orphans. Yet another time we run into prisoners of Organization Todt. That was a working commando and supposedly had misfits and people by German definition of mixed blood. Christian that may be 10% Jewish. We interrogate and discover that some are Jewish. Not exactly to army regulations we set them free. They speak fluent French, if there is a doubt of their identity, we could be sure the French would deal with them.

The SS is The Nazi elite. We have strict orders as to our conduct with prisoners. They do not have to make statements or give information since the Geneva convention protects them. What we do then is have them undress and stand at attention, for as long as they like, in the heat or snow, depending on the weather. The dumbest stay the longest. Besides, unless we are looking for specific offenders, almost anything they tell us, we already know. The war in Europe ends. Our company is deactivated, broken up all the personnel other than German speaking, are shipped back home, we stay. One last glance back, the VE Victory in Europe parade. We march to marching bands playing "Onward Christian soldiers marching as to war," A catchy tune, marched to it often how odd, there marches our platoon or what is left of it. We pass in review, a General is saluting the troops, we have not marched since back in basic. It was a hot spring day in France, so when we come to the review stand the General sees a straggled bunch, essentially out of uniform. Ties loose and the guns slung not in parade mode. By special invitation the General confines us to the barracks. Maybe he thought, that bunch could not have done much to win this war. All I can say we did all we could, we should have looked a little better at the parade.

Now Newberry and I are stationed in Brussels, Belgium working at Army Headquarters. Typing general orders, sleeping in the once SS occupied barracks and having Headquarters type job that is plush. My Captain is a demanding but fair, and we work hard, as many hours as needed. He knows that I am looking for my mother. Since he is the adjutant to General King our Commanding Officer. He authorizes a Jeep, rations and blank authority for gas or anything else I need to go to Prague. I had reasoned that my mother could have been in Theresienstadt., It 's not far from Chemnitz, she might have moved back from Berlin. At any rate, it was a start. Made the trip in seven days. Visited Jewish Community Center in Prague. There were records of those who had left the camp. Those that survived reported and recorded names from memory. Thousands and thousands of names in alpha order. I searched for several days, hoping to find something. I found no trace, if she had been in Theresianstadt, there were no records. My cousin Frank then an officer stationed in Berlin subsequently found that she had been arrested there without further trace. I thought of going to Theresienstadt but the people at the Jewish Community Center advised me not go. Prague and all the country around are under Russian occupation. I have a three lingual pass, but they caution against my going, besides all the records are in Prague and no one is left there. Reluctantly I return to

Brussels. On the way I see DP Camps, displaced persons, we have wonderful names for all that misery. Germany is a mess. The towns were shelled or bombed, that is little consolation. By now we have dropped the A bomb on Japan, I wish we had it sooner. It is not vindictiveness alone, but had we dropped the A bomb on Germany, that would have been cosmic justice.

We are sent home on points, I am very lonesome for Margo and she for me, all the letter writing is no substitute. They Offer me higher rank if I stay with the Army of Occupation, Newberry who is single stays. Typing general orders, usually from scribbles that my commanding officer makes, since I type with my eyes on the notes the process is mechanical, and I do not always read what I type. Finding myself typing my name, ordering me to transfer an American prisoner home. Would have had to wait several more month for regular transfer. Long journey 10 days, again, I land in New York. Deliver my Prisoner and two days later Margo meets me at the station. I still remember the day and what she wore. We had to get acquainted again, and we did. We stayed with Mother and Dad on Lincoln Ave. Margo was still working at B.W. Harris, I went looking for work. Landed a job with Brown Steel Tank Co. in Minneapolis. They needed help, I was a veteran and was hired. Got along with the supervisor, he put me on a job, after a day I was producing what must have been three times my quota, that did not make me any friends. Just changed the way things were done to my way of doing. Couple month later I was put in charge of the night shift. Then it came to light that I was Jewish, that caused some consternation. Mr. Brown the owner came around never even saying hello, he may not have guessed but I had no intention to make his place my life's work.

Joe Moses, Margo's brother now out of the service is going to the U. We decide to go into business. Margo then cautions, but we go on. We start making automotive parts. Parts are scarce, they had not been built for three or more years, and cars need spare parts. Discover I have other talents, I can sell. First locally but shortly thereafter in the Chicago market. We ship parts and accessories. We learn about distribution, establish sales representative network, we grow in size and experience. We experience the up and down of the automotive market. By now we make complete replacement grilles for Ford Chevrolet and Chrysler Cars, not for the Manufacturers, but to the after market. We consume much brass and a salesman suggest, that we call on a local Vending Machine Manufacturer since they need fabricated brass parts. We do not realize it, but now we enter what is commonly know as the Original Equipment Manufacturing or OEM market. That means we will manufacture to their prints and specification. Instead of serving a broad range of customers as in automotive we will sell to Companies making their own product. This business we learn, is more stable, in time we sell the automotive tools and dies, leave that market. We started on 1308 Washington Ave. in Minneapolis, near seven corners, that building was later torn down for a freeway. We built a Plant 216 W.86th in Bloomington. The plant had 6000 Square feet. Had problems, like with any business, we grew, enlarged our customer base, bought more equipment. Our largest customer Continental Vending is going broke. Owe us much money, more over they represent at least 50% of our production. We are now in business over 10 years, looking back we were fortunate to have met people and associates from whom we could learn. The owner

of the Vending Machine Company, Mr. Sandy St. Laurent, was at least twice my age, we became good friends. He gave me good advise and counsel. He early on suggested, that we borrow money from our bank. Make a \$10,000 loan, leave the money in the account, pay back the day its due. I did and that is how I established credit. Now that we found ourselves in need of much credit, we had subsequently borrowed on many other occasions, we could work it out.

We had a rough time, but by now had developed many manufacturing skills and found work from other customers. When we started with the Vending Machines Company I got involved in product design. For my part understanding the manufacturing process and learning the need of our customer could blend in results that were good for both of us. To this day we use this manner to help our Clients and obtain their business. We grew, Joe and I had differences on how the business should be conducted. Joe had married meanwhile, and became concerned about control. Since we found less and less to agree on we went in different directions. In any enterprise, if the owners cannot get along, then employees will do what they like, since instructions will cancel each other. Margo and I decided that we best find a way to either sell, or buy out the partnership with Joe. After many difficult months of negotiation, we wound up buying Joe's interest in the company. The rest is history. To write the history of Bermo would detract from the subject. Probably would be longer, then what I have written so far. No need to spend much more time on business. As it turned out it was for the best.

Now little geography. As stated first we lived on Lincoln Ave in St. Paul but after starting our business we purchased a house in Minneapolis on 55th and Uptown south. Dan and Jeffrey lived there until Nancy came along. When Mom was in the hospital, I moved 2622 Raleigh in St. Louis Park. In 1989 we moved into the Town House 3655 Oakton Ridge in Minnetonka. In 1982 we purchased a condo in Boca Raton, to make the winter a little easier.

In 1948 we joined the Adath Jeshurun, have been members there ever since. We joined Brookview Country Club since our neighbor Art Gepner was president and we enjoyed our membership Swimming and golfing. Subsequently the club was sold and moved to what became Rolling Green Golf Club. From there, we joined Oak Ridge Country Club. I write about this because with each of these move's changes occurred, that effected us, loosing some friends and gaining others. Changes in our economic life altered as we could save and enjoy an ever rising standard of living.

In the earlier years when the success of our Business was not what it is today, prudence required conservative living. We had no one to fall back on. We made many friends. Harvey and Leona Orenstein come to mind, tragically both passed away. Harvey was our Accountant for many years, and his valued advice was helpful to our business. Perhaps the largest influence have been our Rabbis. When first we joined Adath Jeshurun, it was Rabbi Morris Gordon who introduced us to the Friday night services. Then

Stanley Rabinowitz, whose teachings had great influence on our Jewishness. Most influential were Rabbi Arnold Goodman and Rae Goodman, their friendship is very dear. We learned from them, by partaking in ceremonies, and attending services. They gave us some wonderful insight into the meaning and customs. An appreciation of our religion, deepen our commitment and enriched our values.

There is much to write about our social life. Margo if I can induce her should give a much more social version since by all odds she is a people's person. I admit to being a things' person. It is not that people do not matter, it is my orientation to matter itself. As I write this I hate to employ the language of the head shrinks. Not only have they screwed up our society with notions that do little for us, but in the process enriched them. Surely there are some really sick people that require their service. What we see is a profession looking for expansion of their market, that dovetailed nicely with the media and it's hokum. They have created more victims than I care to list, making us a society of victims. I have been close enough to real victims, to understand that they need our empathy and help. We have now come to the point, when we will no longer be able to distinguish the phony from the real.

That leads me to the conclusion. Now that I described who I am, a few words of what I believe. Before I go on let me confess, that this last chapter is probably the umpteenth draft. I have the feeling, no matter how careful and thoughtful, I will not be adequately to the task. After all talking about our heritage.

A Jew in America is a bundle of contradictions, even at my age I am still trying to sort it all out. Why are we not in Israel? Is there any doubt, that had we, Diaspora Jews elected to come. Lend our efforts and industries, would have change a critical mass?. More than doubling the population would have made a difference. That there are many reasons is obvious, their merits another question.

We have 613 commandments, many of which we do not observe, we might conclude since we do not observe all, why any? Pesach will be in a couple days. I always like to study the Hagada. "Let my people go, so that they can serve me" To what purpose? To follow Gods instructions. The essence of that is to choose kosher from treve, I am not just referring to food. A whole agenda of chose life. To strive for goodness, and good deeds. Surely that is black and white easy to choose, what about gray? Those choices are made by our religious heritage, Jewish law, custom or tradition. What is required, that we learn study and understand it.

I stated, that the world changed in my life time as much as in hundreds of Previous Years. Radar, Jet propulsion, Planes and Missiles, Atom Bomb, Transportation, Moon landings, Satellites, Coronary Bypass, DNA, Biotechnology, Computers and Electronics. Not least of all the scientific method, a process of establishing scientific facts. All have affected us and the way we think, behave, and believe. Yet Judaism pretty much stayed the course. With all the innovations of reform and the conservative movements, the fundamentals of Jewish Law have not changed. All the reforms have done is introduce new language, to accommodate what ever new life style they would like to please. Water down what is pretty thin already.

I see a big problem in the amalgam called America. Our moderns would have us believe that there are no beliefs, you have your values and I have mine. Clash or compromise, in the end the beliefs and the values suffer. Being Jewish requires a degree of separateness, I know that this is not welcome news. We would like to be just like everyone else. The boundaries of separateness, if observed will maintain your Jewishness. That requires choices and priorities. Is attendance of parties, sports, and entertainment more important than observance of Holidays and customs?. From my history there is this conclusion, if you are going to be Jewish and that is your choice, then embrace it. It is a tree of life, and all those who cling to it, are happy.

Just as I have made every effort to learn and deepen my understanding of Judaism, I like you to set aside a portion of time and effort to do the same. It is my hope that in so doing you will gain understanding, and an appreciation for your Jewish Heritage. It will give direction to your path, a light to your feet in joy as in sorrow.

Your loving Parents and Grandparents.

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